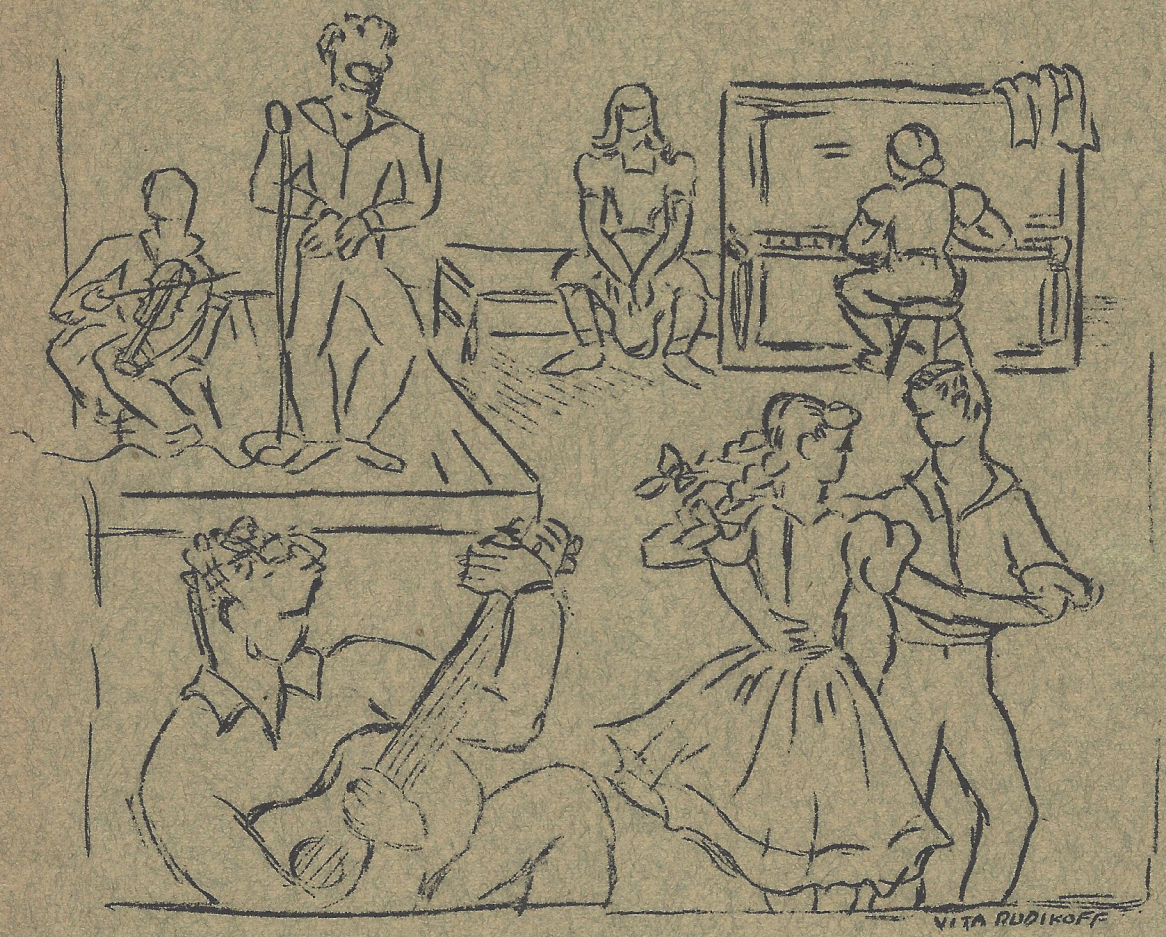
PRIMEWAVE

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN FOLK LORE



AMERICAN SQUARE DANCE GROUP

MARGOT MAYO

LEADER

VOL. III. NO 6

JUNE ISSUE

"PROMENADE"

Official organ of the American Square Dance Group
"The purpose of the American Square Dance Group shall be to make available those rich stores of native dance, music, drama, and general Americana, which together comprise American Folk Culture; to conduct such activities without regard for race, creed, color, social position; to cooperate with those who hold similar views."
A.S.D.G. Constitution

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Goodbye For Now

Time has a habit of slipping away much too quickly these days. Now we have to say so long for a while to our subscribers and to some members of the Group. As you know, Promenade takes a little vacation every year and we won't "get out" another issue now until September, which will be the combined summer issue.

Since this is the end of our winter season of activities, as it were, we like to sort of sum up our work, check up on ourselves, and make plans for the coming season. This has been a very busy year for us, with "open house" parties at our studio, every other week, adding up to some twenty in all with over forty demonstrations of the Group. (a caller, musician, a square set of dancers) some twenty-five "single" demonstrations (a caller and a musician), and several "steady jobs", such as the Cooperative at Knickerbocker Village, every other Sunday evening, handled first by Margot, then by Judy and Joe; the course in folk dancing at the New Dance Group every Friday evening, taught by Margot. And then, the USO every other Wednesday evening, so far, over a three month period. Also, we gave a half-hour program of American folk music and dances, in the American Music Week Festival of station WNYC, and a broadcast by Manny to South America; the program was heard in this country over NBC, over some seventy-seven stations . We've done our share of benifits for all the Allied Reliefs and the AWVS, plus the USO. We've really had a lot of fun !!

Then, don't forget our four albums of records for Decca, and, of course, "Promenade"!

I personally want to thank the members of the Group for all their work, for helping at "open houses", for appearing in demonstrations, for work on Promenade. I particularly want to thank the Juniors; Judy Altstadt and Vita Rudikoff, most of all, for the "drudgery-work" of getting out invitations to the "open houses", mimiographing tickets and Promenade and taking care of the clerical work involved in running the Group. And I want to repeat how much we miss the boys we've "loaned" to Uncle Sam, and how impatiently we await the time when we can all be together again for some good old rousing square dances.....

So, until September, adios....have a nice vacation, and send-in to us any dances, tunes and songs you "pick up" this summer.

ALAN MEETS A FIDDLER

Being a city dweller and having seen dozens of books about "hill folk", I sort og got the idea that folk music dwells in the mountains like the Smokies, the high wildernesses of Eastern Kentucky and the Adirondacks. So being stationed in Florida, naturally the first gesture would be to scout around for Seminole Indian folk lore as a sole possibility. But it never occured to me that Florida is a wilderness itself, not unlike mountain sections it has its farms spread far apart with a Grange Hall every 20 odd miles for Saturday night "frolics" as they are called down in Arcadia. And it was an overwhelming surprise to find that these wildernessess have their fiddlers, their callers and their folk songs too.

The first awakening was one night as I sat in the barracks and played some banjo tunes the ASDG used to sing and play together while driving to "demonstrations". The old watchman on the Field here, who was just coming in for duty, stopped by the window and just watched, all in smiles. Finally he made his conventional compliments and we entered on a revealing conversation about Florida folk lore, which gave one reference to an old fiddler six miles from here, named Alderman Keene, who fiddles and calls square dances at the "frolics" in town every once in a while.

So the next day when I went up solo, I flew over the spot the old watchman designated by a crude map and saw nothing except what apperaed to be two deserted shacks. Naturally the disallusionment was great at the moment but I couldn't help feeling maybe someone around there would know of him and his new address, maybe I could get some further references and sources.

The following Sunday afternoon a fellow cadet dropped me off at the path I remembered seeing from the air. This path turned out to be the right one, a sandy lane that crosses through countless clumps of palmettos and weeds. So I started down the path with my banjo looking everywhere for snakes and feeling like a picture cover of a back issue of Promenade.

I could see a round, old woman sitting in a rocker on the porch, then that second shack turned out to be a barn with one horse, two 300 or 400 pound sows and their litter of about ten, a cow and a model T Ford. The woman stopped rocking and stared at me as I approached. Finally I stopped at the gate and asked, "Does Alderman Keene live here?" "Yes" she replied and nothing more. "Well, could you tell me where I'd find hem, please?" "Over in the barn" she motioned with her thumb, curiously.

And there he was, banging away on a piece of steel on the anvil; his car was jacked up on a milk box and evidently was tinkering with one spring. He looked up and before he could say anything I threw him the question "Are you Alderman Keene?" "Why hello son" he replied, "I'm Alderman, what can I do for you?". Then I told him about his famed fiddling at the "frolics" and he laughed. He took his hat off an d with the same hand scratched his head, still holding on to the hammer. But he was a hard man to tame and hold down to fiddling.

"What'cha got in the case, son?" he queried. I told him about the Group and how I learned to play a banjo and he beamed approvingly and said he hadn't seen a five stringer since a "feller" named Kirkland played one in Waycross, Georgia. Then we went out together, with his fingers tapping at his sides. I imagined he was priming up for the fiddle, and he introduced me to his wife, the lady in the rocker. I felt she surely was friendly because after we began a conversation about "frolics" in town, she frequently spat between her two fingers from the porch. She wouldn't, I imagine, do this unless the guests were on familiar terms. We talked a great deal about her four sons, due to be drafted while Alderman got out his fiddle and began to rosin the bow. When he got warmed up he sat down with his fiddle in his lap and asked me to hit up a song to see if we were in tune. I was just waiting for that and opened up on "Soldier's Joy". He jumped up and ran inside and yelled something to the effect, "C'on out in front and get a load of this". Well, two young fellows who were still shaving, came out to the front porch and just stood inside the screen door "stomping" on the hard wood floor.

Old Fiddler Keene was making that instrument sing out and for a while I don't think I payed too much attention to what I was doing. The fiddle barely rested

on his overalls pocket and he fingered it down near his knees.But inspite of the rusty spots in melody from hard labored hands,he covered them up beautifully with real fiddle discord.

I don't know that I can describe Alderman Keene.He's like so many people I've seen,red face,small nose,small eyes,wide smile ,no teeth and stright white hair,parted on one side. Since I've been down South I've heard too many people say"Hit sure is a hot day" to be surprised at the expressions he used.They come as close to the language of the hill folk as anything I've ever heard described.

Later when his family of married sons and daughters came for a Sunday afternoon get-together,they made me feel quite at ease and kept Mr.Keene and me going for an hour straight.Can't say that I remember anything more but one song he sang of the"Altoona Wreck of 1927" and he had to keep asking his wife for the words which she tossed back indifferently and casually.

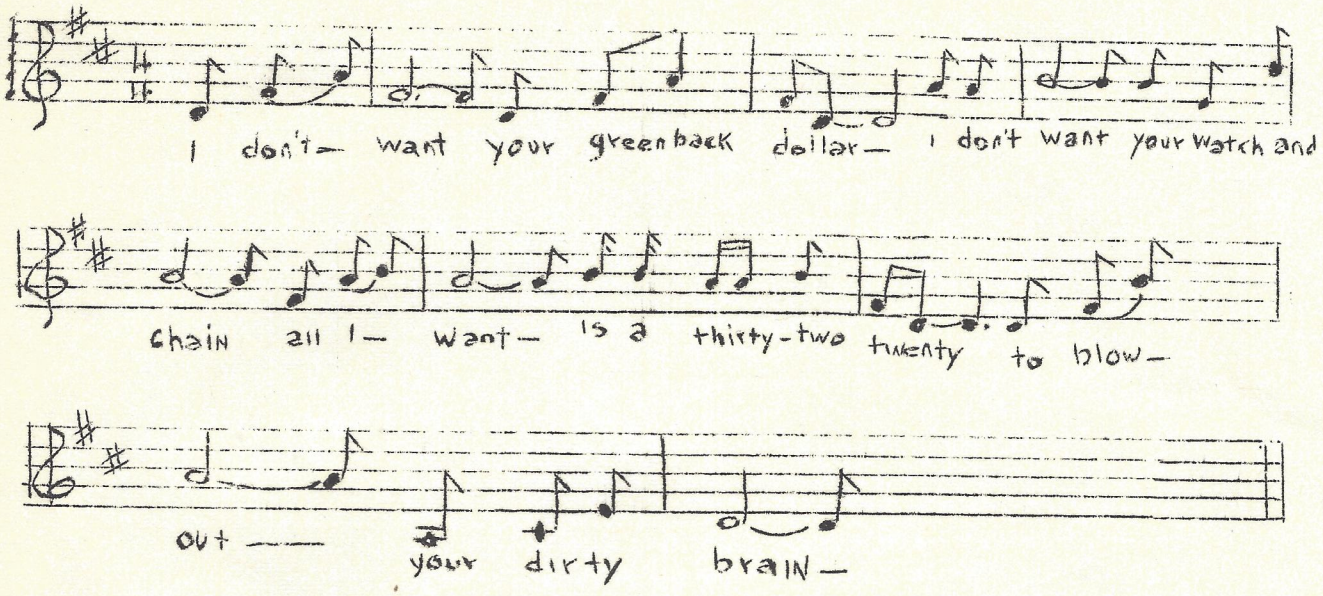
Before I realized it the afternoon had crept up to 6:30 and that was only a half hour before limits. So with hurried apologies to all,I grabbed my case and thanked Mr. Keene for a swell afternoon.Yet I evidently wasn't too conscious of Florida customs and courtisies,for the old man insisted upon driving me to the Dorr Field Road,the main highway. So we got into another model T Ford,a duplicate of the first one on the other side of the house,and we rode down a double tire-worn track with the engine sputtering,the door swing open and the tin roof rattling. He said it was Evangilist Terrace.He gave it that name about ten years ago when he first broke through the road ,over the wilderness of palmettos.

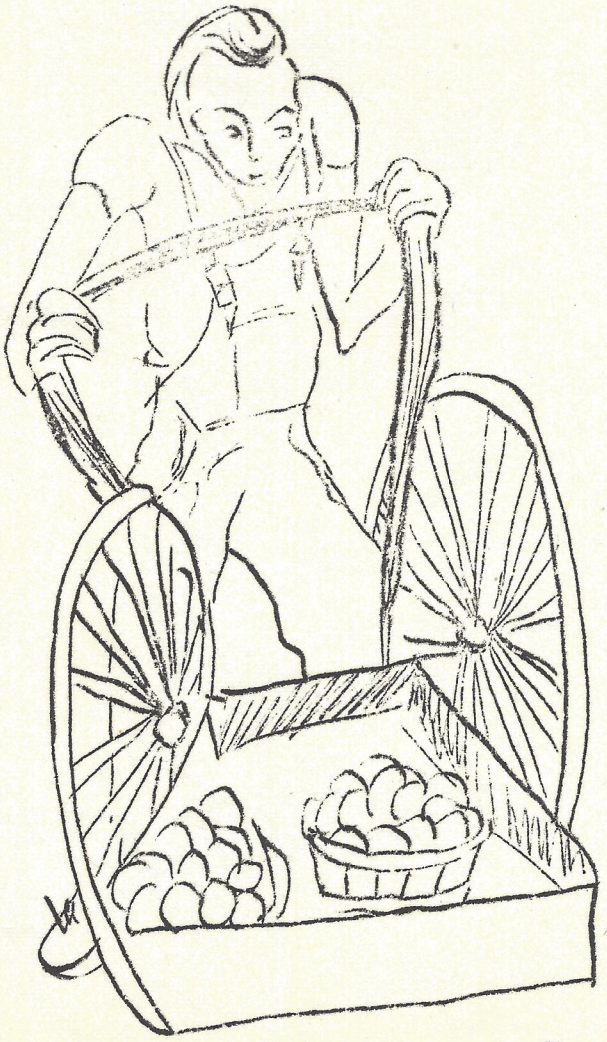
It was that same little dirt road I first saw from the air and I had walked in on.Finally when we hit the Dorr FieldRoad,he took out a bag of fruit from under the front seat and smiling,handed it to me asking me to drop over soon again and bring the other cadets who played guitars and harmonicas.

It was so simple and straight forward! He shook hands and pointing back to the farm called something over the noise of the engine. I just stood and watched him lumping and bouncing down Evangilist Terrace,Old Fiddler Keene,who for some twenty years has been calling square sets every Saturday night.

GREENBACK DOLLAR

(collected by Alan Swartz. Singer, E.J. Ford)
Bristol, Tenn.

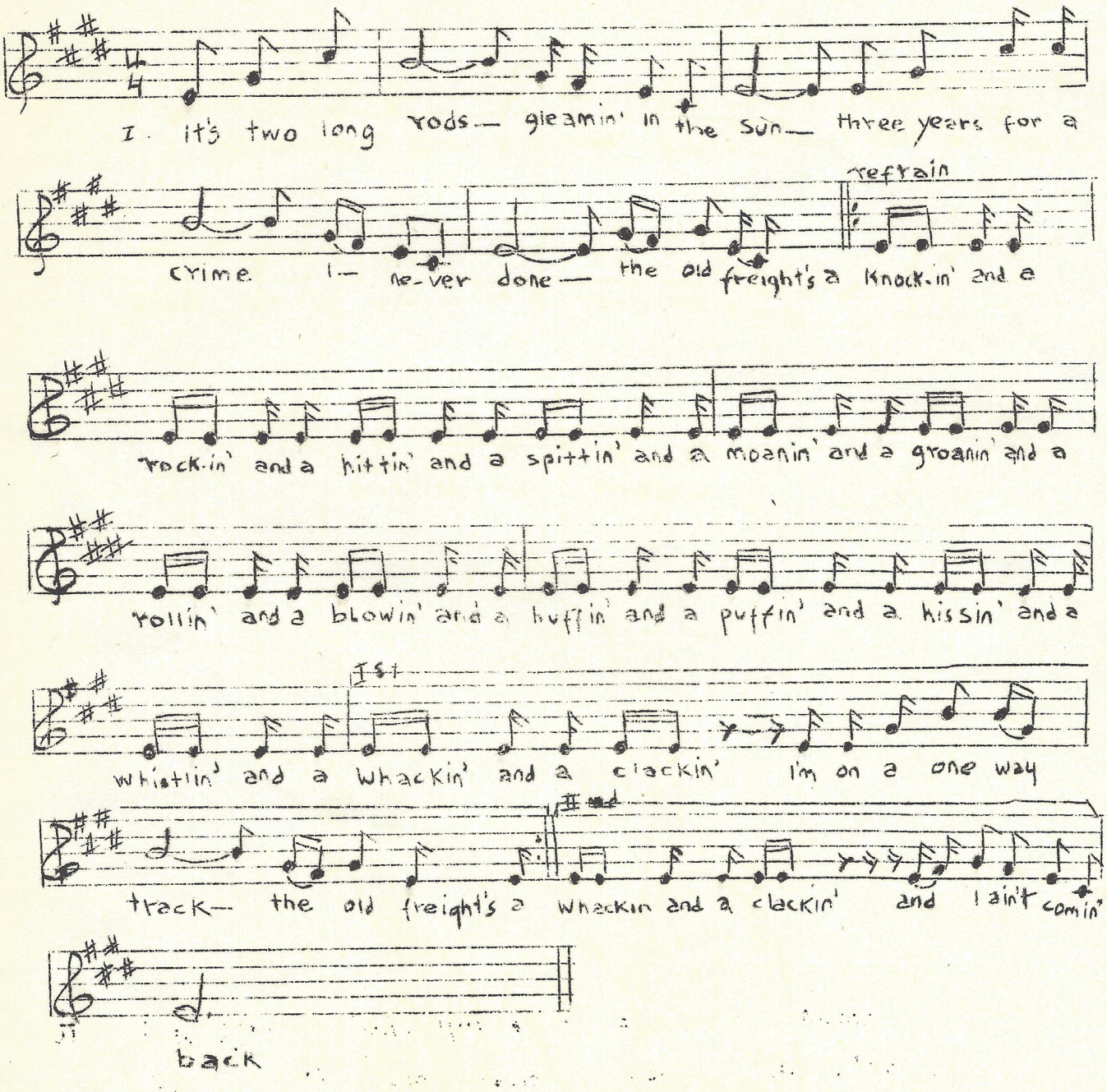




B.

THE OLD FREIGHT TRAIN

(collected by Alan Swartz — sung to him by E.J. Ford of Bristol, Tenn.)



II It's three long years since I been
And I ain't goin' back 'cause I'm all alone.

We hope you can read our writing — and understand our first and second endings!

Editor's note

FREEHOLD FLING

(collected by Whitey Lehrman, Jr. G roup
in Freehold, N.J.)

Formation: Square Set
M usic: Any lively sqare dance tune.
Introduction: Honor partners, corners, promenade(gent takes girl in skating position and they walk around set to original place.)

Calls:

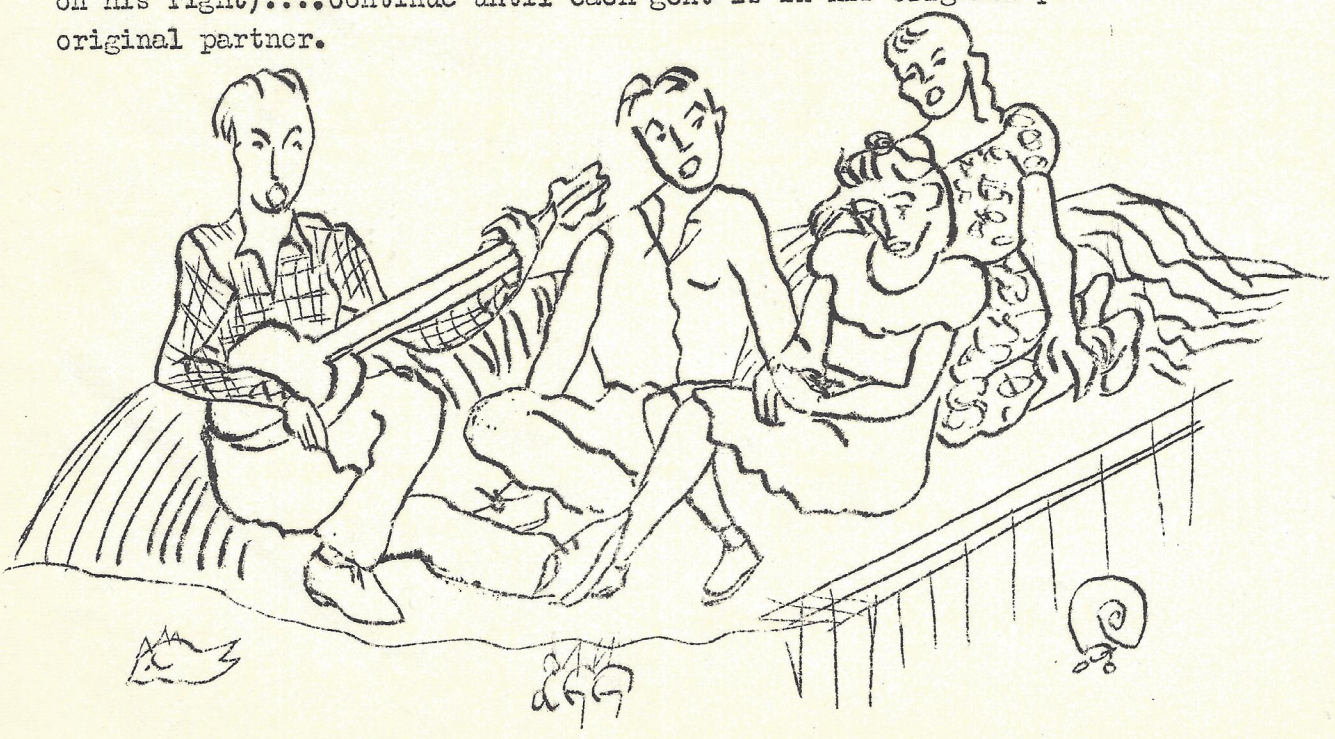
1. First couple to the right swing your opposites
2. Take her on to the next, swing opposites.
3. Take her to the fourht couple, second couple on to the third, swing opposites.
4. First couple home, second couple on to the fourth, swing opposites.
5. Second on to first, third couple on to the fourth, swing opposites.
6. Second couple home, third couple to first, swing opposite.
7. Third couple on to second, fourth couple to first, swing opposite.
8. Third couple home, fourth on to second, swing opposites.
9. Fourth couple on to the third, swing opposites.
10. Fourth couple home, everybody swing your own

C horus: Promenade.
(Repeat for each couple, leading out to the right - if the dancers can"take it".)

Description:

First couple moves to the second couple, and each gent swings his opposite lady. The first gent takes the second lady as his new partner and moves on to the third couple, while the second gent continues to swing the first lady until the call, "second couple on to the next". The first gent exchanges the second lady for the third, and takes her on to the fourth couple, while the third gent swings the second lady, and the second gent moves to the third couple, etc.

The first gent returns to his original position (with the fourth lady on his right)....Continue until each gent is in his original place with his original partner.



"MIDDLEBURG"

(collected by Barbara Fox in Middleburg, Conn.)

Formation: square set
Music: we suggest The Wagoner in this issue of Promenade
Introduction: Honor your partners, corners, circle left.
Calls:

1) First gent allemande right with your right hand lady allemande left with your own.
2) First couple right and left with the opposite couple
3) First gent allemande left with your left hand lady allemande right with your own

Chorus:

4) Allemande left with your corner
Grand right and left all the way round
"Honor your partner"

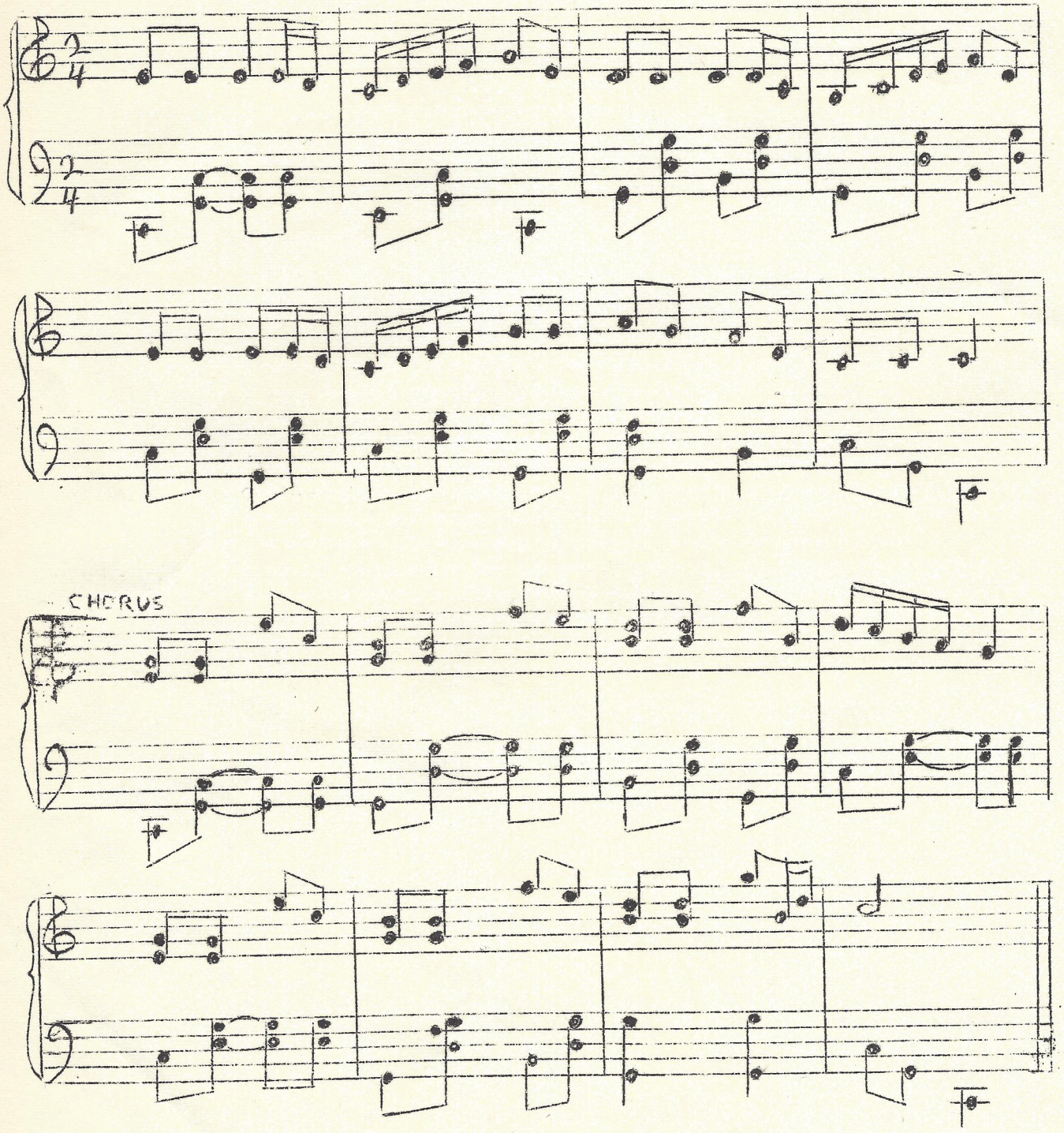
Description:

1) The head gent goes out to the lady on his right and turns her around with a right hand then he goes back to his partner and turns her around with a left hand.
2) The two head couples advance toward each other, the ladies passing by right shoulders inside, while the gents pass on the outside. The gents back around while the ladies walk forward and the right and left is repeated the same way as before, each couple returning to place.
3) The first gent goes out to the lady on his left and turns her around with a left hand, then he goes back to his partner and turns her around with a right hand.
4) Everybody then faces the lady on his left and gives a his left hand, turning once around back to place , then giving his partner a right hand, a left hand to the next lady in line and so on around the ring, passing your partner by until your reach home.

(the dance is repeated with each couple in turn.)

"THE WAGONER"

(As played on the harmonica by Group member Stuart Jamieson, and "Notated" by Margot.)



This particular version comes from the West, by way of the Adirondacks.